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Wednesday, October 15, 2008

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October 15, 2008

Stressed-out metro mom abandoned boy with \$10

Lack of Mich. mental health services faulted by advocate

BY MEGHA SATYANARAYANA
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The metro Detroit woman who drove 12 hours and about 725 miles to give her teenage son to the state of Nebraska under its safe haven law did so because she was stressed out and was trying to teach him a lesson, according to the youth's affidavit to authorities in Douglas County.

The 13-year-old told officers his mother said as she left him, "Just do what you have to do, and I'll check back with you soon." He had luggage, extra clothes and \$10, according to an affidavit.

The teen said his mother told him that because police were involved, he "would realize she wasn't kidding anymore."

"It was thought-out," said Brenda Beadle, chief deputy of the Douglas County Attorney's Office in Omaha. "She dropped him off and, according to the child, couldn't deal with him anymore."

The youth is in Nebraska custody under the state's controversial safe haven law, which allows parents to relinquish children up to age 18 to the custody of the state, while most states, including Michigan, permit only the abandonment of newborns and infants.

One child advocate in Michigan said Tuesday he suspects the mother's desperation and flight to Nebraska are due to a lack of mental health services in Michigan.

"This shows there are some serious weaknesses in the mental health system in Michigan," said Jack Kresnak, former Free Press reporter, now president of Michigan's Children. "Parents find it hard to access mental health. There needs to be a more coordinated system between mental health and the juvenile courts."

Meanwhile, the abuse of Nebraska's law has legislators there rethinking it, and prompted Michigan child welfare officials to warn parents not to rush through any decision about relinquishing their children because of family stress or economic woes.

Before the Nebraska trip, Michigan's Department of Human Services was already investigating a complaint regarding the family, spokesman Edward Woods III said in a previous interview.

The Michigan teen is the second child from out of state and one of 18 children relinquished in Nebraska since the law's inception. No newborns have been handed over, said Todd Landry, director of the division of children and family services in Nebraska.

Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman, a Republican, has come out in favor of tightening the law, and lawmakers say the law will change soon to limit surrenders to newborns and increase services for children and their families.

"In the coming legislation, we need to define the safe haven with it just as the infant child, 72 hours old or younger, and the other portion, what is happening today with the other children being left off, we need to address the services that are being provided to address children, parents or guardians," said Arnie Stuthman, the Republican Nebraska state senator who authored the legislation.

Colleen Steinman, a Michigan DHS spokeswoman, pointed out that the mother didn't have to drive to

Nebraska if she wanted to give the teen up. Child Protective Services has offices in each county in Michigan that are prepared to take any child, she said.

"It's very hard work," Steinman said of parenting. "A lot of people, for a lot of reasons, shouldn't feel they are less of a parent if they seek help."

On Tuesday afternoon in Nebraska, a judge granted a petition to set a hearing date for Oct. 27, at which point the mother will either regain custody of her son or terminate parental rights, Beadle said.

The mother, an aunt and a grandmother drove from Southfield and arrived about 1:30 a.m. Monday at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha to leave the teen.

Beadle said the mother may still be in the Omaha area. It was unclear Tuesday whether she has broken any Michigan laws.

"The child is doing as well as can be expected," said Kathy Osterman, spokeswoman for the Nebraska Department of Human Services. He was healthy and in no danger when he was left at Creighton, but NDHS would not elaborate further. Beadle said both states are cooperating in the interests of reuniting the child with his family.

The Free Press is not identifying the teen because he is a minor and is not identifying the mother because no charges have been filed against her.

The intention of the Nebraska law covering children up to age 18 was to help families with young children who may be in danger, not to give parents of out-of-control teenagers an out, said Stuthman.

Stuthman said he introduced the legislation after a newborn was left to die by a creek and another was abandoned in a trash bin, but survived. The original version was limited to newborns and was changed in committee, he said.

"The law is being abused," said Stuthman of parents who abandon their children to state care. "It seems like a simple solution to a long-term problem."

But with court intervention and home investigations, Stuthman said, "it's not a simple solution."

Michigan's "safe delivery of newborns law" was enacted in 2001. Since then, 60 newborns have been abandoned. Most of the newborns were abandoned by their mother or parents after being born in a hospital. Two were surrendered to police and one to fire officials.

The Michigan law allows a parent to leave a baby fewer than 72 hours old in a hospital, fire station or police station without fear of prosecution.

The law was amended to allow parents to call 911 and leave the baby with an emergency service provider, such as a paramedic or an emergency medical technician. Once medical authorities confirm the child is in good health, it is eligible for adoption.

Steinman said that the prosecutor in the parent's home county decides whether the parent in this case has broken any law and whether she may face abandonment or other criminal charges.

Contact **MEGHA SATYANARAYANA** at 313-223-4544 or megha@freepress.com.



Michigan mother who left son in Omaha identified

10/14/2008, 7:08 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Court papers filed by the Douglas County Attorney's Office have identified the Michigan mother who abandoned her son this week.

Terri Martin drove her 13-year-old son roughly 12 hours from Detroit, Mich., to leave him at Creighton University Medical Center in Omaha early Monday. State officials have said she heard about Nebraska's unique safe-haven law through news reports.

The boy told authorities his mother is under high stress and could not deal with him anymore.

The court document filed in Douglas County Juvenile Court also says Martin failed to provide proper parental care and support for her son. For that reason, the county attorney's office says the boy is at risk for harm.

The boy remains in the state's custody.

He was the 18th child left under Nebraska's safe-haven law since it took effect in July. He is the second child left from outside the state.

Nebraska's law allows anyone to leave a child as old as 18 at a state-licensed hospital without fear of prosecution for the abandonment.

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Published Wednesday October 15, 2008

Michigan mother trying to teach son lesson when she left him at Omaha hospital

By MATTHEW HANSEN and MARTHA STODDARD
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN - A Michigan mother who dropped off her teenager at an Omaha hospital may have used Nebraska's unique safe haven law to try to teach her son a lesson, according to a police affidavit.

The 13-year-old boy is now in an Omaha emergency shelter even though the mother had second thoughts about using the law after she dropped him off at Creighton University Medical Center with luggage and clothing early Monday.

"She told hospital staff that since local police were included, she would just come back to get (her son), since now he would realize she wasn't kidding anymore," the affidavit says.

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services officials confirmed that the mother had second thoughts about leaving her son. But once a child is left under the law and the state has taken custody, parents or guardians lose their right to make decisions about what happens to the child.

The Michigan teen was the second child from out-of-state, and the 19th child overall, to be dropped off at a hospital and, in one case, a police station, since Nebraska's safe haven law took effect in July.

The Nebraska law sets no age limit on the children that can be left, making it unusual since safe haven laws in most states allow only infants to be left at hospitals. Parents or guardians cannot be prosecuted for leaving a child with a hospital employee on duty. They can, however, be charged with other acts of abuse and neglect and can lose their parental rights.

The newest safe haven case may also be the most unusual.

The affidavit says that the boy's mother, grandmother and aunt drove him from the Detroit metropolitan area to Omaha - a distance of more than 700 miles - for the express purpose of leaving him at a hospital.

The boy was dropped off with luggage, additional clothing and \$10, the affidavit says. He told police that his mother "has high stress" and "couldn't deal with him anymore," the affidavit says.

The teenager has no criminal history, according to police.

Michigan and Nebraska authorities say they are now working together to resolve the case in the child's best interests.

Contact the Omaha World-Herald [newsroom](#)

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RELATED

- [Nebraska's Safe Haven Law](#)



Wednesday, October 15, 2008

Boy left in Neb.: Mom was stressed

She told hospital staff cops' involvement was aimed at scaring son, but now his future is in state's hands.

Francis X. Donnelly / The Detroit News

A Metro Detroit mother told police she abandoned her teenage son in Nebraska because she was highly stressed and couldn't deal with him anymore.

The mother, whom The Detroit News is not naming to protect the identity of the child, dropped off her 13-year-old son at an Omaha, Neb., hospital Monday with luggage, extra clothing and \$10, according to a report by Omaha police.

Nebraska has a state law that allows children in danger to be surrendered to hospitals without the parents being charged with abandonment.

Upon leaving her son at the hospital shortly after midnight, the mom, 38, told him, "Just do what you have to do and I'll check with you soon," according to the police report.

The hospital contacted police, who then interviewed the boy.

After learning the police had talked to her son, the mother apparently had second thoughts.

She told hospital staff that the police involvement would show her son she "wasn't kidding anymore" and that she planned to retrieve him.

At that point, however, it was too late.

Under the Nebraska law, once a child has been abandoned, the local prosecutor's office investigates the matter to determine what should happen next.

In this case, a Douglas County juvenile judge approved a petition by the prosecutor's office to temporarily place the child under state custody.

A court hearing on what to do with the child in the long term will be held Oct. 27.

He could eventually be returned to his mom or placed in a foster home in Michigan. The boy, who is held at an emergency shelter, will be moved temporarily to a foster home in Nebraska, officials said.

Efforts to reach the boy's mother or father were unsuccessful.

A woman who answered the phone at the home of the woman's mother declined comment.

According to the police report, the woman's mother and aunt accompanied her and her son on the 12-hour, 700-mile drive from Southfield to Omaha.

The women have remained in Omaha since dropping off the boy, according to Nebraska health officials. The woman's mom had remorse over what she had done, they said.

The boy's father, who didn't make the trip, was aware of it, the mom told health officials.

It wasn't clear whether the boy's parents live together.

It also wasn't known whether the mother had sought help with her son in other ways before deciding to drive to Nebraska to take advantage of the state's 3-month-old safe-haven law.

The incident marked the second time in a week that a family from outside Nebraska came to the state to surrender a child.

Last week, a 14-year-old girl from Iowa was left at an Omaha hospital by her grandparents. She has since been returned to family.

Besides those two cases, 16 children from Nebraska between the ages of 1 and 17 have been surrendered under the state law. Several parents or guardians cited the children's uncontrollable behavior as the reason.

Nebraska officials are worried the broadly written law will make their state a dumping ground for unwanted children. The legislation was geared toward infants but contains the word "child," which some have taken to mean anyone under age 19. Two state Legislature committees will hold a joint meeting in November to consider changing the law.

Michigan's Safe Delivery of Newborns law enacted in 2001 lets people drop off newborns less than 72 hours old anonymously and without criminal charge at hospitals, fire halls and police departments, and includes paramedic or emergency medical technicians who respond to an emergency call.

You can reach Francis X. Donnelly at (313) 223-4186 or fdonnelly@detnews.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.detroitnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081015/METRO/810150401>

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How to dump your kids: the Nebraska solution

Sick of arguments and teenage bad behaviour? In America, some parents have woken up to the fact that, thanks to a loophole in one state's law, they can legally abandon their children there.

The Independent, London
Leonard Doyle reports

Wednesday, 15 October 2008



AP Todd Landry, who runs children's services in Nebraska says he empathises with families across the country that are struggling with parenting issues

Gary Staton's face was knotted with anxiety. An Omaha TV station was quizzing the young Nebraska widower about why he decided to walk into a hospital with nine of his 10 children and abandon them there. "We raised them together," he said. "I didn't think I could do it alone. I fell apart. I couldn't take care of them."

Mr Staton, 34, left the children, aged one to 17, at a hospital, telling staff that their mother, his wife, had died and he could not handle raising them alone. A quirk in a new Nebraska law makes it possible to abandon a child without fear of prosecution.

"I was able to get the kids to a safe place before they were homeless," he told KETV Omaha. "I hope they know I love them. I hope their future is better without me around them."

Mr Staton is not alone. The economic turmoil in the country means that many more American families are falling into a sinkhole of debt, despair and hopelessness.

In Nebraska some parents have rushed to abandon teenage children to the mercy of the state. Two of those were driven in from out of state, from Iowa and Michigan.

Over the last two months 18 children have been abandoned. The latest was driven for 12 hours from the gritty city of Detroit, across four state lines before arriving at an Omaha hospital on Monday. His mother dropped him off in the early hours and then disappeared back home.

The spate of abandonments began on 1 September when a mother quietly dropped off her 14-year-old son at a police station in Omaha. Three weeks later another two boys and a girl, aged 11 to 14, had been left in the care of hospitals in Lincoln and Omaha. Then came a 15-year-old boy and an 11-year-old girl. There followed a procession of custodial grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts, fathers and mothers. In the past month they dropped off 15 older children they said were beyond their control.

This was not the outcome child welfare lobbyists expected when they persuaded the state to pass its so-called "Dumpster baby law" to protect newborns. Now Nebraskans are up in arms about the law and complaining that feckless parents across the country are rushing to take advantage of taxpayers' generosity.

A raging controversy about irresponsible parenting has been whipped up in the state. And there is much hand-wringing by officials as they hurry to close the loophole in the law to protect abandoned newborns – before more out-of-control teenagers are dumped on the state's hands.

Nebraska's mini-epidemic of abandoning children may soon be over, but it has cast a harsh light on the underbelly of troubled times across the US. Amid lost jobs and foreclosed homes, countless families find themselves without a safety net. Out of work, many cannot afford or access counselling or psychiatric services when they or their children most need it.

The Detroit woman who ditched her apparently wayward teenager on Monday does not appear to have any ties to the state. The boy is now in an emergency shelter in Omaha. There is nothing to suggest that he was in danger before being abandoned.

Nebraska's so-called "safe haven" law, which went into effect in July, allows parents or care givers to drop off children at a hospital and wave a tearful goodbye. But instead of being used to prevent the abandonment of newborns by frightened unwed mothers, parents with out-of-control teenagers have taken advantage of it.

The law was designed to enable mothers drop off newborns they cannot care for without fear of being prosecuted. Across the US more than 2,000 babies have been handed to hospitals since Texas enacted the first such law in 1999. But Nebraska offered to protect children up to age 19.

The law's sponsor, state senator Arnie Stuthman, said the intent was to protect all children from falling through the cracks. But why Gary Staton gave up all his children except his 18-year-old daughter remains a mystery. His wife died in February 2007 after the delivery of their 10th child. The family was living in a small wooden house with the roof falling in and a blanket over a broken window. Welfare officials found the home was filthy, without gas or water and took away the children for nine months.

Stunned relatives offered last week to take in the children, and officials expect to send them to two family homes as soon as background checks were complete. Nobody knows why Mr Staton did not ask for help.

"I empathise with families across our state and across the country who are struggling with parenting issues," said Todd Landry, who runs the state's child services. "But this is not the appropriate way of dealing with them, in Nebraska or another state."

Harsh economic times have led to steep reductions by local authorities where tax revenues have dried up. Welfare services have been cut to the bone and care, counselling and psychiatric services are unavailable to troubled families. Mark Courtney, an expert on child welfare, told The New York Times: "There's a huge void in services for distressed families."

The minimal health insurance afforded by many middle-class families covers scant psychiatric services. Many cannot afford regular or residential programmes for troubled children. Only the poorest Americans can claim Medicaid and many therapists do not accept the rates paid by the welfare system.

"In Nebraska, as in a lot of states, we don't have funding to provide a strong mental health system for kids," admitted Judy Kay, from an organisation which helps families in crisis. "But we do have resources that many parents are not using."



KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Woman pleads guilty to killing her 2-month-old daughter

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

Kalamazoo

BY LYNN TURNER

lturner@kalamazoogazette.com

388-8564

KALAMAZOO -- Prosecutors will recommend a Kalamazoo woman spend at least 18 years in prison for killing her 2-month-old daughter.

Amber Marie McIntyre-Roden, 23, pleaded guilty Friday to second-degree murder for the death of Tamiah McIntyre-Roden.

The mother was initially charged with first-degree child abuse after police were called July 19 to Bronson Methodist Hospital on a report of child abuse. The charge was changed to an open count of murder after an autopsy found the baby died of blunt-force trauma to the head.

Court documents show the prosecutor will recommend at her Nov. 10 sentencing that McIntyre-Roden spend 18 to 30 years in prison in exchange for her guilty plea. She could have faced up to life in prison.

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October is Child Support Month

Tuesday, October 14, 2008 at 2:32 p.m.

On Tuesday, Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm proclaimed October as Child Support Month in Michigan, recognizing the importance of child support in strengthening families and providing critical financial support to children.

Michigan's child support program, administered through the Michigan Department of Human Services in partnership with the friends of the court and prosecuting attorneys, facilitates the collection of over \$1.4 billion annually for children and families in our state. An estimated 4,698 individuals work in the child support system. For each full-time worker, an average of \$603,465 was collected in 2007.

"Child support payments help feed, clothe and house families," DHS Director Ismael Ahmed said. "It also reduces poverty and maximizes economic opportunity. Child support is private money that prevents the family from needing public assistance to care for their children."

More than ever, Michigan employers are critical to the program's success. When an employer receives an income withholding notice from the friend of the court, they collect the money from the employee's pay before issuing payroll checks. The payment is sent directly to Michigan's child support central processing operation, the State Disbursement Unit. Employer income withholding accounts for about 80 percent of all child support collected.

In addition to employers, many state departments, hospitals, and community partners cooperate with the state program to ensure that families receive quality child support services. With an estimated 500,000 children in Michigan currently living in poverty, child support is an important way to help families get the support they need.

For more information, please consult the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/childsupport



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Michigan governor eating on food stamps

Tuesday, October 14, 2008 at 2:48 p.m.



LANSING, MICH. (AP) -- Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm is eating like a food stamp recipient this week to raise awareness about poverty.

The governor says she took her son shopping Sunday at a Meijer grocery store. They could only spend \$5.87 per day per person.

She says she bought a lot of macaroni and cheese.

Granholm is one of about 300 people statewide participating in the Michigan Food Stamp Challenge. More than 1.3 million state residents receive food stamps.

The state hopes the challenge will raise awareness and boost donations to support nine regional food banks.

The Democratic governor was asked about the program Tuesday after she announced tax credits to create about 2,500 direct jobs at seven companies and two downtown redevelopment projects in Michigan.

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The Saginaw News

Challenge publicizes hunger

Wednesday, October 15, 2008

GUS BURNS

THE SAGINAW NEWS

The Michigan Department of Human Services is challenging community leaders and residents to eat on less than \$2 per meal for five days.

The "Michigan Food Stamp Challenge" illustrates the need for supplemental charitable food agencies, such as soup kitchens and food banks, they say.

Challenge participants were to restrict themselves to spending no more than \$29.35 from Oct. 13 through Oct. 17 -- equivalent to \$5.87 per day or \$1.96 per meal -- to simulate what recipients experience with Food Stamp Program funding. Today, at the East Side Soup Kitchen, 940 E. Genesee, beginning at 2 p.m. several speakers were to discuss poverty and hunger.

Speakers were to include Ismael Ahmed, Department of Human Services director; Lillie Williams, director of the Saginaw County Community Action Committee; and Pam Cole, director of the East Side Soup Kitchen.

"We're hoping this will bring attention to the program," said Gisgie Gendreau, director of public relations for the Department of Human Services. "We're also asking participants to donate to their local food banks and donate their time at food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens."

Gendreau said two Saginaw residents were to speak about their experiences with food stamps and poverty.

According to the agency's Web site, www.michigan.gov/poverty, the federal Food Stamp Program helps more than 1.3 million low-income Michigan residents annually, more than half of them children. One in five Michigan residents have incomes below the national poverty level.

Today's event is a prelude to a poverty summit scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 13, at Cobo Hall in Detroit, featuring keynote speakers Jennifer M. Granholm and Martin Luther King III. Visit the Web site for registration and details. v

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

As crisis bites, more Americans turn to food stamps

15 Oct, 2008, 0732 hrs IST, AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm this week is doing something millions of her constituents are being forced to do year-round; she's living on food stamps.

"She is one of 300 people who are taking a pledge" to eat like a food stamp recipient, including executives of Michigan-based auto giants General Motors, Ford and Chrysler and dozens of legislators, said the state's human services department chief Ismael Ahmed.

"It's my second day on 5.87 dollars a day," Ahmed said. "I've already calculated that I'll be out of bread by Thursday."

While penny-pinching among the wealthy may help draw attention to poverty issues, living on food stamps is a devastating reality for millions of Americans – and the numbers are growing to alarming levels.

The number of food stamps being distributed in the United States approached a new record this summer and promises to reach a new peak with repercussions of the financial crisis starting to bite.

More than 29 million Americans received food stamps in July, an increase of close to one million over just three months earlier, according to the latest figures released by the US Department of Agriculture, which distributes the benefits – these days most often by magnetized debit cards – to households living below and just over the poverty line.

It is the highest number since 2005 when, in the aftermath of catastrophic Hurricane Katrina, some four million additional people sought food relief, pushing the total to a historic high of 29.85 million.

The latest figures do not yet count the new requests for assistance in September, when several financial institutions collapsed, stock values plunged, housing foreclosures soared, and job losses spiked to the highest level of the year.

"The food stamps program is very sensitive to changes in the overall economy," said James Ziliak, director of the Center for Poverty Research at the University of Kentucky.

He said families have been broadsided by the rise of multiple household costs including food (6.1 per cent in the past year), gas and heating. Hundreds of thousands have also been hard hit by the effects of Hurricane Ike which in September devastated parts of Texas and several southern and midwestern states.

"We've seen an increased participation in the food stamps program which is a critical component of the safety net here," Ziliak said of the federal program instituted in 1943 and which today costs some 30 billion dollars a year and provides an average household benefit of 95 dollars per month.

Karen Johnson, 54, explains that the 81 dollars in foodstamps she receives each month is not enough for her and her 17-year-old daughter.

"Sometimes I have to ask somebody to buy me a little food or something," says the Hurst, Texas resident. "I hate to ask people, 'Can I have some bread? Can I have some hamburger meat?' It's kind of rough on me sometimes."

In the aftermath of the November 4 presidential election, Democrats in Congress hope to pass a bill providing 150 billion dollars in funding for low-income families, including a more ambitious food stamp initiative.

Ziliak said he didn't expect the number of people receiving the benefits to fall for some time.

"Gas prices are still very high for low-income families," and with home heating costs expected to rise in the coming winter, energy costs will "take a big chunk out of the paycheck," Ziliak said.

"For lower income America it's been a pretty tough economic time over the past year."

Call it very tough

According to a new report by the Working Poor Families Project, one in four working families – a total of 42 million adults and children – are low-income, earning too little to meet their basic needs.

"Understandably, all eyes today are focused on the financial and economic crisis affecting America's working families," said the report's author, Brandon Roberts.

"But the stark reality is that America's working families have been in economic crisis long before this year."

According to the Census Bureau, more than 37 million Americans live below the poverty line, which is now set at 21,000 dollars per year for a family of four.

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Everything Michigan

Saginaw County kicks off Food Stamp Challenge, ask people to donate money, time to charitable cause

by Gus Burns | The Saginaw News
Wednesday October 15, 2008, 7:45 AM



The Michigan Department of Human Services is challenging community leaders and residents to eat on less than \$2 per meal for five days.

The "Michigan Food Stamp Challenge" initiative illustrates the need for supplemental charitable food agencies, such as soup kitchens and food banks.

Challenge participants were to restrict themselves to spending no more than \$29.35 from Oct. 13 through Oct. 17 -- equivalent to \$5.87 per day or \$1.96 per meal -- to simulate what recipients experience with Food Stamp Program funding. Today, at the Hunger Solutions Center/East Side Soup Kitchen, 940 E. Genesee, beginning at 2 p.m. several speakers discuss poverty and hunger.

Ismael Ahmed, director of Michigan Department of Human Services, will speak about poverty in Michigan and the Nov. 13 Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit; Lillie Williams, director of the Saginaw County Community Action Committee, will address countywide hunger and food charity initiatives; and Pam Cole, director of the East Side Soup Kitchen and Hunger Solutions Center, will discuss local poverty trends and the need for food donations to groups such as the East Side Soup Kitchen and Hidden Harvest.

Cole expects about 40 people, composed of community leaders, the general public, media and food stamp challenge participants.

"We're hoping this will bring attention to the program," said Gisgie Gendreau, director of public relations for the Michigan Department of Human Services. "We're also asking participants to donate to their local food banks and donate their time at food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens."

Gendreau said two Saginaw residents will speak about their experiences with food stamps and poverty.

According to the agency's Web site, www.michigan.gov/poverty, the federal Food Stamp Program helps more than 1.3 million low-income Michigan residents annually, more than half being children. One in five Michigan residents have incomes below the national poverty level.

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MICHIGAN REPORT

The Capitol Record Since 1906

REPORT NO. 199, VOLUME 47-- TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14 2008

GRANHOLM TRIES A WEEK ON FOOD STAMPS

[Governor Jennifer Granholm](#) purchased "a lot of macaroni and cheese" as she spends this week living within the constraints of a food stamp budget. The governor is one of about 300 persons who volunteered for the exercise of living on the \$5.87 per person per day provided by food stamps to low-income persons.

Ms. Granholm said her shopping trip on Sunday to Meijer's, where she was accompanied by her son, was a valuable lesson for both. The Food Stamp Challenge is designed to raise awareness about poverty.



MICHIGAN REPORT

The Capitol Record Since 1906

REPORT NO. 199, VOLUME 47-- TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14 2008

REPORT SAYS 26% OF WORKING FAMILIES ARE LOW INCOME

Michigan ranked 17th among all states in the proportion of working families who were classified as low-income in 2006, with 26 percent in that category, a national report released on Tuesday said. The report by the Working Poor Families Project also found 19 percent of Michigan jobs are in occupations that pay below the federal poverty level for a family of four.

Nationwide, the 42 million individuals in working low-income families represented an increase of 350,000 since 2002, the report showed. The report also covered education levels, racial makeup, housing costs and insurance coverage.

Sharon Parks, president of the Michigan League for Human Services, said the report shows more funding is needed for community college programs supported by the No Worker Left Behind project, where waiting lists exist, and for other programs to increase worker skills in high-demand occupations.

In Michigan, the report found 22 percent of low-income working families have at least one parent without a high school degree and 48 percent without any post-secondary education.

Michigan Department of Human Services News Release

Contact: Edward Woods III, director of communications, (517) 373-7394 or (517) 927-1884

DHS director invites Detroit residents to take Michigan Food Stamp Challenge, donate to local food banks

Event highlights the Michigan Harvest Gathering and Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit

Oct. 14, 2008

DETROIT - Can you enjoy three nutritious meals a day with just \$5.87? That's exactly what about 300 Michigan residents will do this week to bring attention to the effects of poverty and increase donations to local food banks and soup kitchens as part of the Michigan Food Stamp Challenge.

"More than 1.3 million Michigan residents received assistance from the federal food stamp program," Michigan Department of Human Services Director Ismael Ahmed, who is taking the challenge, said at a Detroit event today. "Hunger is just one of the many devastating effects of poverty."

The food stamp program - known as the Food Assistance Program in Michigan - is part of a safety net for Michigan residents, many of whom work, but still can't make ends meet. Over a million of them will supplement their food budgets this year by visiting a local food bank - and the need is growing. In some parts of the state, emergency food providers are reporting as much as a 25 percent increase in the number of people seeking help with food this year.

That's why Ahmed and about 300 Michigan residents, including Carol Goss, president of the Skillman Foundation; Sheilah Clay, president and CEO of the Neighborhood Service Organization; Mike Brennan, CEO of the United Way of Southeastern Michigan; and Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm took the Food Stamp Challenge. Their pledge calls attention to the effects of poverty in Michigan and demonstrate the need for increased donations as part of the Michigan Harvest Gathering, an annual event to raise food and funds to support the state's nine regional food banks that serve agencies helping people in all 83 Michigan Counties.

The Michigan Food Stamp Challenge encourages people to spend just \$29.35 for food per person in a five-day period, equivalent to the maximum amount a Michigan resident who has no income might receive in food assistance benefits. The minimum amount of benefits is \$14 a month with the average benefit being about \$100 a month. Michigan's Food Assistance Program is designed as a safety net to help ensure people have access to food during difficult economic times. More than half of all recipients are children and 8 percent are over the age of 60.

Food Stamp Challenge participants also have the option of making a donation of time or money to a local food bank or local soup kitchen.

"While the Food Stamp Challenge will be an eye-opening experience for many people," Ahmed said, "it's important to focus our attention on reducing poverty and maximizing economic opportunities for all."

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Contact: Edward Woods III, director of communications, (517) 373-7394 or (517) 927-1884

DHS director invites Grand Rapids residents to take Michigan Food Stamp Challenge, donate to local food banks

Event highlights the Michigan Harvest Gathering and Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit

October 15, 2008

GRAND RAPIDS - Can you enjoy three nutritious meals a day with just \$5.87? That's exactly what about 300 Michigan residents will do this week to bring attention to the effects of poverty and increase donations to local food banks and soup kitchens as part of the Michigan Food Stamp Challenge.

"More than 1.3 million Michigan residents received assistance from the federal food stamp program," Michigan Department of Human Services Director Ismael Ahmed, who is taking the challenge, said at a Grand Rapids event today. "Hunger is just one of the many devastating effects of poverty."

The food stamp program - known as the Food Assistance Program in Michigan - is part of a safety net for Michigan residents, many of whom work, but still can't make ends meet. Over a million of them will supplement their food budgets this year by visiting a local food bank - and the need is growing. In some parts of the state, emergency food providers are reporting as much as a 25 percent increase in the number of people seeking help with food this year.

That's why Ahmed and about 300 Michigan residents, including Sen. Mark Jansen; Denise Hubbard, executive director of the Montcalm County United Way; Dr. Thomas Hass, president of Grand Valley State University; and Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm took the Food Stamp Challenge. Their pledge calls attention to the effects of poverty in Michigan and demonstrate the need for increased donations as part of the Michigan Harvest Gathering, an annual event to raise food and funds to support the state's nine regional food banks that serve agencies helping people in all 83 Michigan counties.

The Michigan Food Stamp Challenge encourages people to spend just \$29.35 for food per person in a five-day period, equivalent to the maximum amount a Michigan resident who has no income might receive in food assistance benefits. The minimum amount of benefits is \$14 a month with the average benefit being about \$100 a month. Michigan's Food Assistance Program is designed as a safety net to help ensure people have access to food during difficult economic times. More than half of all recipients are children and 8 percent are over the age of 60.

Food Stamp Challenge participants also have the option of making a donation of time or money to a local food bank or local soup kitchen.

"While the Food Stamp Challenge will be an eye-opening experience for many people," Ahmed said, "it's important to focus our attention on reducing poverty and maximizing economic opportunities for all."

On Nov. 13, policymakers, low-income residents and service providers from across the state will gather at Cobo Center in Detroit for the Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit. They will look for ways to ensure that as Michigan's economy recovers, our poorest citizens are not left behind. This first-of-its-kind summit in Michigan is sponsored by the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Governor's Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity, and the Michigan Community Action Agency Association.

The Poverty Summit is not just a one-day event, but kicks off a statewide initiative to reduce poverty and maximize economic opportunities. After the event, participants will continue to work on regional teams to implement practical solutions to address the needs in the regions where they live.

For more information about the Food Stamp Challenge and the Voices for Action 2008 Poverty Summit, including registration forms, please visit www.michigan.gov/poverty. To donate to the Harvest Gathering, please visit www.feedmichigan.org.